Church unity
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The Correlation of Christian Forces

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I am a Baptist. I have more and better reasons than my friend, John Smith. The other day some one asked him why he was a Baptist. He retorted: "Why am I a Smith?"

But even the most strenuous Baptist must admit the presence of Christians of other names. In all there are 168 religious bodies in our country and it is said to be a poor year for Boston when it fails to add two more to the number. Wisconsin does not have representatives of all these sects, but it has its due proportion. Our population is 2,228,949. The Catholic population, according to their authorities, is 505,165. The Lutherans do not bulk any less; they have the largest number of clergy. It is safe to say that fully one-half of the people of Wisconsin are Catholics and Lutherans.

The Methodists come next with about 55,000 members in about 480 churches. The Episcopalians number 20,590. The Congregationalists have 24,326 members in 277 churches. The average church has 87 members and a home expense of $945. Last year 44 churches made no report. There are 143 churches, including the non-reporting churches, which have 50 members and less; these churches

raise on the average for home expenses, $230. There are 88 churches with 25 members and less. During the last year there were 2,143 accessions, a net gain of 403; 101 churches reported no accessions at all. The Presbyterians have 17,176 members in 194 churches, an average membership of 88. The average church raises for home expenses, $991. There are 109 churches with 50 members and less, which raise on an average for home expenses, $196. There are 65 churches with 25 members and less. Last year there were 1.655 accessions, a net gain of 252; 77 churches reported no accessions.

The Baptists have 18,900 members in 215 churches. Each church has an average membership of 88 and an average home expense of $703. There are 96 churches with 50 members and less, whose average home expense is $146. There are 50 churches with 25 members and less. The accessions last year were 1,630, a net gain of 373; 71 churches reported no accessions. Last year 9 of the churches which reported had enjoyed no regular service for over a year; 14 churches were too weak to make any report. Ten years ago 15 churches reported which have since become extinct. At the end of the decade 29 churches no longer report, which were active at its beginning. During the decade 25 new churches have been organized. Between the years 1860 and 1870, 94 churches reported which have subsequently ceased to exist. Part of the host have crossed the flood and part are crossing now. There is scarcely a town in our state, without a church of our order, in

whose cemetery a Baptist church has not found ignoble repose. Of 197 English-speaking churches but 68 are self-supporting. In one of our associations every church has fallen below the level of self-support.

It requires but little imagination to see behind these statistics many a tragic story. The long, desperate struggle of little companies of believers; the unavailing sacrifices; a ministry compelled to labor under conditions that break the heart; and in hundreds of instances, the cessation of church services and the death of the church.

The soil of Wisconsin is not friendly to evangelical churches. The rural districts grow slowly, if at all. The cities grow, but not the countryside. And what we are pleased to call "Americans" are being rapidly replaced by "foreigners." The latter constitute about three-fourths of our population. On the whole they are a splendid citizenship, but they are a difficult material with which to build up our own churches. Listen to the recent wail of a presiding elder of the Methodist church in southwest Wisconsin: "It is not an easy task to make a glowing report that will produce a good feeling in the meeting from a district in which so many charges seem to be struggling with the inevitable. We have commodious churches in country places where a few years ago large congregations assembled, when pastors' salaries were easily paid, and there was a pride in the good record for benevolences. In many of these churches congregations have dwindled to a few."

To what extent do the churches of our various denominations occupy the same fields? Many of them are in cities and towns where they do not elbow each other greatly. Others, in country districts, occupy fields alone. But in multitudinous cases evangelical churches are crowded together under conditions that impose ruinous competitions.

A vacation ramble this summer took me to Fox Lake. I made an inventory of the churches. It is typical of many Wisconsin towns in its ecclesiastical status. There is a population of 991 in the town itself and, of course, a tributary country district. The Catholic population is 500. The Baptist church has 83 members; the Congregational, 50; the Methodist, 66; the German Lutheran, 28; the German Evangelical, 15; the Episcopalian, 35. These figures suggest a motto for a united and militant Romanism: "Divide and conquer."

It is not a pleasant task, but, nevertheless, a post-mortem examination of some of our dead churches may prove instructive. It discloses death by starvation and seems to vindicate the extreme doctrines of Malthusianism. This is the wasted corse of our church at Maiden Rock, a town of 304 people. Here, not far from the village, was a Baptist church of 24 members, last report, a Presbyterian church of 13 members, and a Methodist church of 89 members. The same sad demise through undue pressure on the means of sustenance is apparent with respect to the sorrowful remains of our church at Trempealeau. Here in a town of 609 people there was a Baptist church of 24

members, last report, a Congregational church of 74 members, and a Methodist church of 139 members. If we take our place by the bedside of one of our dying churches the same malady is in evidence. Baldwin is a town of 631 people; the Baptists report 24 members, the Congregationalists 34 members, and the Presbyterians 136 members.

Like the Bourbons, however, we learn nothing, forget nothing. Consider the wooing of Ladysmith, a town of 1,720 people. The Baptist church has 43 members, the Methodist 80, the Congregationalist 42, and the Disciples, 114. They are aided from mission funds; the Baptist, $150; the Methodist, $125; the Congregationalist, $300; the Disciples, $200. The Presbyterians recently withdrew from Monroe, where they had spent $3,000 in a vain effort to establish a church. In this town during the period there were other struggling evangelical churches aided by mission funds, while in its cemetery lay a Baptist church, all its struggles ended. In a northern village of 400, according to a paper issued by the Federation of Churches and Christian Workers, were Methodist, Evangelical, Baptist and Congregational churches, aided respectively by missionary societies $50, $80, $100 and $150. The average salary received by the pastors was $450, including support from other fields of labor. It gives hope for the future to record that since then these churches have in a measure united forces. These figures reveal a solemn waste of the Lord's money. And broad-minded men of affairs in our churches, men who merge a dozen lit-

tle red school houses into one central township school, who know the value of combination in modern business enterprises, these men have a right to say to us: "We demand a better correlation of religious forces. We will give millions for real extensions of the kingdom of God, but not a cent for wasteful, and even futile, sectarian rivalries."

The blame for this state of affairs does not rest upon any individual, certainly not upon the heroic pastors of the mission churches, nor upon the noble men at the head of our denominational affairs. We must, at present, work in the midst of these competitions, or not at all. It is nobody's fault and it is everybody's fault. Conditions can be effectively remedied only by the development of a better public opinion among the evangelical churches and by concerted action.

There are three possible attitudes toward the present ecclesiastical situation. In the first place, we may disregard the presence of other Christian churches. Irrespective of their presence in the community, we may seek to establish and maintain a church of our own order. This attitude has conceivable justification. Our Lord bade us go everywhere and preach the gospel. If the pagan Presbyterians and the heathen Methodists do not preach the gospel, it is our duty, at whatever cost, to enter every community and preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God. The policy of disregard has hitherto been earnestly followed. It is, today, the rule of many denominations. As soon as a handful of adherents can be gathered, organize them into a

church, launch them on a precarious craft on the ecclesiastical seas, and do it all without consideration for Christian people of other names.

Another possible attitude is comity. This is an elastic term which may mean anything from pleasant remarks at each others' conventions to respect for each others' fields of labor. We preserve our separate denominational organizations, but recognize the presence of fellow-believers and cooperate with them. We hold revivals together and attend one anothers' chicken-pie suppers. Sometimes we mutually abstain from entering fields already occupied, or even make mutual concessions with respect to fields where we find ourselves fellow occupants. A fine illustration of comity is presented by the evangelical churches of San Francisco. They have appointed a general committee, whose duty it shall be, as far as possible, to locate churches in the new San Francisco so that their fields may not overlap. On our foreign fields the principle of comity largely prevails. There is division in territory and even co-operation in labor. For instance, the English Baptists and the American Presbyterians now unite to support a college and a theological seminary in China. Perhaps comity is the most we can hope for and the best we can do is to keep on along old lines and avoid clashes as far as possible.

But there is, at least, another conceivable attitude with respect to the present religious problem and that is unity. By this term we mean the organic union of various denominations. There is only one kind of unity and

that is organic. The church is not a mechanism, but an organism; it is a living thing. To use Paul's figure of the human body, the hand is not the eye, but it is related to the eye by an organic bond. There is not identity of substance, but there is vital and visible co-ordination. Many members, one body. The highest organism has the greatest diversity of parts, consistent with unity; the amoeba is a simplex, but man is a complex. Certainly, a union of churches must base itself in oneness of spirit. Tying a cat and a dog together does not constitute church union. But a unity of spirit that does not express itself in outward ways is too intangible and elusive for our planet. If the present divided state of Christian people in our communities is church union, "spiritual" union, one is curious to know what division would be. Perhaps, unity is a far-off and impossible ideal, an upper room prayer for which there is no answer. But some of us are visionaries enough to believe that what ought to be, can be, and some day, will be.

There are, today, many discernible tendencies toward unity. Long estranged members of various families are getting together; Presbyterian and Cumberland Presbyterian; Baptist and Free Baptist. Denominations also are seeking a common organic life. Congregationalists, United Brethren and Methodist Protestants, through their committees, have agreed upon everything but name, the least consequential and the most troublesome thing of all. In Canada, Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists have taken several

steps toward an organic union. In our own country, not long ago, an inter-church conference on federation was attended by representatives of thirty Christian bodies. In England there is a federation of the free churches which prophesies their ultimate union. Henry C. Vedder, Professor of Church History, at our Crozer Theological Seminary, says concerning many of the English Baptists: "They receive to membership any Christians without asking whether they have been baptized or not. From this to the dropping of all denominational distinctions would seem no long step. The federation movement may or may not hasten that which seems in any case to be probable, not to say inevitable." And from Japan, Professor E. W. Clement of our Baptist Academy at Tokio, writes that Japanese Christians will not perpetuate the sectarian divisions of the west. They will constitute themselves a united church, Baptists among them, on the basis of freedom with respect to the ordinances.

In Wisconsin, there is a strong trend toward union. At Waupun. we have a union church of Baptists, Free Baptists and Disciples; at Monroe, of Baptists and Disciples. And the signal blessing of God has been upon their work. At Sparta, Baptists and Congregationalists have formed a virtual union; at Mauston, Baptists and Presbyterians; at Ladysmith, Baptists, Congregationalists and Disciples have taken preliminary steps toward union. This movement is certain to spread. Christian people, weary of strife and meager results from labor and sacrifice, are coming

together. All the dead weight of our ecclesiastical machinery, all our lust for sectarian statistics and all the conservatism of our various denominational officialisms cannot keep them apart much longer. Whether we like it or not, we must front the new situation and define our attitude toward it. Brethren in other states may not appreciate our problem, but we are face to face with it and we are compelled to seek some solution.

In its journey through history the church of Jesus has entered a new historical climate. We breathe a new time-spirit. Every climate evokes its appropriate vegetation, whether in the artics or in the tropics, stunted fir trees or towering palms. Every great expression of Christianity is historically conditioned. Philosophical historians tell us that, relative to the state of human culture when they flourish, all institutions are necessary. The Roman Catholic church, with its assertion of absolute external authority, was needful to the child peoples of western Europe. The only way to rear a child at the first, is by absolute external authority. But with the intellectual self-realization of these peoples there came the assertion of personal freedom. Protestantism inevitably arose with its declaration of the self-witnessing power of truth and the finality of the verdict of his own conscience for every man. Despite its mistakes, the Roman church performed a service of incalculable value. Protestantism, with its new-found freedom, at once divided into many sects, because only thus could all truths necessary to a complete Christian system receive

proper emphasis. Let no one speak disparagingly of the sects. They were a historic necessity. But, like Romanism, they have their day and, like Romanism, their power will be broken. The time is at hand for a new incarnation of the eternal idea of the church. Sectarian shibboleths everywhere lose their power of appeal. The Christian consciousness of our time will not tolerate the divisive cry. A new note sounds in the air, the note of union. And in all the denominations countless hearts respond with glad, quick throb.

Many forces operate to bring Christians into closer organic relations. A better acquaintance tends to bring us together. Ignorance is the mother of conceit and prejudice, while knowledge is the mother of tolerance and co-operation. There has been vast increase in the general means of intelligence—books, periodicals, travel, schools. Such movements as the Christian Associations, Christian Endeavor, Anti-Saloon League, union revival meetings, have brought Christians of many denominations into close acquaintance. The result has been the repetition of the experience of William Jay. One foggy morning he saw at a distance a dragon, horrible and portentious, approaching him. It soon assumed the appearance of a giant, fierce and repellent. A few moments later there emerged from the fog his brother John. When we look through the fogs of ignorance all manner of misconceptions are possible. But my brother has emerged from the fog and lo, he is as good as I am. He is as honest a citizen, as noble a home builder, as generous a

giver, as ardent a disciple of Jesus. By these tokens, I know that he has all the essentials of religion. And whom God has accepted by the gift of his Spirit, as a narrow-minded disciple learned long ago at Caesarea, I cannot count common or unclean.

J. Campbell White tells us that when he started to college he thought the Presbyterian church was about the only church worth belonging to and the only one the Lord could rely on for winning the world to himself. A visit to the inter-denominational students' conference at Northfield partially disillusioned him. After two years spent in visiting colleges of all denominations, as a representative of the Students' Volunteer Movement, his emancipation was complete. "It was impossible," said he, "for me to go through an experience like that without finding in every denomination men as Christlike as were to be found in any other, and it was impossible for me to feel that there would be any serious barriers set up between Christians, if they could understand and know each other. The thing that has swept all denominational prejudice out of my mind has been simple contact with people of all churches."

A wider world-view is, also, a unifying force. In all directions the horizons have stretched out. "During the past fifty years," says President Eliot, "the world has been made over." Politically, it is impossible for Americans any longer to be provincials; the era of international politics is here, Manila Bay so decided. Astro-physics tell us of an illimitable universe and numberless aeons. History, archaeology and sociology give

us new conceptions of the grandeur of human development. Society, by virtue of the subjugation of mechanical forces, has undergone vast changes in organization; it has shifted from the base of individualism to the base of collectivism. The "social" era has come in good earnest in the life of man. In the realm of religion new questions are to the fore. There was a time when the Mennonites divided over the propriety of wearing buttons or hooks and eyes, a time when monks waged bitter controversies over the shapes of their tonsures. In our day, Herbert Spencer tells us that we cannot know God, and Ernst Haeckel tells us that there is nothing but dirt. These are issues that strike to the very foundations of all religion. And, somehow, as we stand in the presence of the new issues, the questions which once divided evangelical Christians begin to shrivel up. They do not seem as consequential as they did aforetime. A new sense of relativities has come to us. And there is necessary a revision of the things we account essential and non-essential.

A new practical problem, also, compels the correlation of Christian forces. Civilization becomes increasingly complex. The ways of doing things which met the needs of a simpler time now prove insufficient. A type of work is required for which the resources of divided churches are not adequate. The city, ever growing, is a practical problem of tremendous moment. Protestants are growing weary and ashamed of the retreat from densely populated downtown centers to the select and respectable sub-

urbs. Something seems to be wrong when evangelical churches cluster in a pleasant neighborhood while vast areas of the city are given over to ugliness, materialism and corruption. The rural districts, also, constitute a serious problem. The people who live there are graduates of the American public schools, which ever grow bet ter, and you can not satisfy them with "onct a month" preaching. And there are country neighborhoods, not a few, so bereft of religious agencies, that pagan and heathen tend to re-sume their original significations, Latin and Saxon, country folks.

Among our practical problems, also, looms the pagan world. The denom-inations working apart can not give Christian ideals to Asia, Africa and the isles of the sea. Experience has taught them to apportion territory. But it has inevitably occurred to the folks at home that a denomination good enough to be given the exclusive task of christianizing Burmah, or Syria, is good enough to have its fields at home inviolate; it is even good enough to correlate our own forces with it.

"The living questions," says Wil-liam N. Clarke, "are such questions as whether Christianity is able to ele-vate the ideals of common life, to check the overweening power of mon-ey, to limit self-indulgence, to bring in a high standard of honesty, to protect the family from disintegrating influences, to diminish drunkenness and the social evil, to rescue the lost part of the community, to commend religion to all souls, to condemn and banish war, to create confidence in righteousness as a living power, to

establish brotherly kindness as the law of life, and whether Christians have any power to come together in effective unity for these large Christian purposes."

The advantages of correlation are manifold. A united church could erect a building which would be an education in public taste and an uplift to the religious spirit. Let the sects in the village appoint a strong committee on incendiarism, sale or transformation into library or parish house. Then, let them erect a temple to the living God, large, well-equipped and beautiful. Ministers' salaries could then rise to the proper level. They have shown little tendency to keep pace with the increased cost of living. John Mitchell said at the time of the coal strike that a living wage for an ordinary miner's family was $650, and the cost of living has since risen. But the minister is under far greater expense than the miner with respect to dress, books, travel, contributions to benevolence. The fact is, however, that one-third of the Congregational ministers in Wisconsin receive less than $600 a year. There is a Methodist conference with 150 ministers, 115 of whom receive less than $700, including house rent. Doubtless, Christian people could pay more, if they would, under present circumstances, but the correlation of religious forces would wonderfully simplify the problem. Such correlation, also, would release funds for wider missionary undertakings. Instead of being a burden upon missionary societies, the united Christian people of a community could with self-respect maintain the cause of Christ

in their midst and become themselves the source of supplies for real missionary enterprises.

The spiritual advantage of correlation would be incalculable. In every community there are comparatively few people really qualified to teach Sunday School classes. Their services would be available for all the children of the village in the school of the united church. In like manner, also, there are comparatively few people who can really sing. Let their blended voices praise God and inspire all the people in the worship of song. Pentecost found all the disciples in one place and of one accord. Pentecost will come again when we get together. Jesus knew the secret of Christian conquest when he prayed, "I pray, that they may all be one, that the world may believe that thou didst send me." When the disciples of Jesus are one, the world will be won.

Is it practicable? Is union of any of the denominations possible? Doubtless, unification will come as a growth, and we can not prematurely hasten the vital processes of the kingdom of God. But God works through men and the divine order is agitation, education, consummation.

There are two stars by which we must sail, if we ever reach our haven—loyalty and freedom. There are some things upon which we must all agree. We can not correlate forces with any society of atheists. The men who constitute the larger church must believe in God, the Father, in Jesus, the supreme disclosure of the infinite holiness and love, in the obligations of a life of service, and in the certainty of the endless life. But

there must, also, be a sphere of freedom. We can not think alike upon all points, temperament and training forbid. If we are to wait for correlation until all Christians accept our individual opinions, correlation will never come. Union is not attainable by deglutition, but by federation. The lion and the lamb will lie down together, but the lamb will not be inside the lion. We have no churches to give away. We have sacrificed too much ever to dream of abject surrender. If we cannot join our brethren with our banners flying, we will fight it out along the old lines if it takes a thousand years. But are there not divergent opinions in our capacious Baptist fold? Yet we love one another, constitute one fellowship, and toil together for the progress of the kingdom. Baptists enjoy a proud distinction as believers in freedom. Their struggle for religious liberty is one of the glorious and imperishable chapters of history. And this is the present day question,—does a Baptist believe enough in freedom, to believe in it for his brother Christian, as well as for himself?

Any organic union of denominations must take into account creed, organization and ordinances. It is scarcely to be doubted that there is among evangelical Christians a body of common opinion which is sufficient to be a covenant of faith. Nor does organization present for some denominations, at least, insoluble problems. Some of them are democracies like ourselves. Our divided condition as Christians is due, in some measure, to a sincere effort to conform to a pattern of church government pre-

sented in the New Testament. It is now widely believed that the New Testament does not give us a hard, wooden pattern of church government, but rather great architectonic principles. What we see in the records of the apostolic age is an organism adapting itself to conditions. "Deacons" were chosen, at the first, not to conform to a prescribed and immutable form of organization, but to meet an exigency in the life of the church. President W. H. P. Faunce of Brown University, recently declared, "Embryonic forms of the Congregational, Presbyterial and Episcopal order are clearly discernible in the New Testament." Any form of church government, therefore, which is true to the New Testament principle of the brotherhood of believers, and which does the work that needs to be done, is good enough for me. The ideal polity will somehow blend individualism and co-operation.

"The strength of the Pack is the Wolf,
and the strength of the Wolf is the
Pack."

We Baptists are splendidly strong on Wolf, but we are woefully weak on Pack.

Do the ordinances present insurmountable barriers to union? We know that all through history battles have raged around them. We believe, in common with all Protestants, in their symbolic character, we ascribe to them no magical power. As symbols of great truths we account them sacred. But we can not forget that they are but symbols. If we could approach the question without prepossessions where would Christian people put matters of symbol, in the

sphere of loyalty or in the sphere of freedom? If there was agreement with respect to realities, would a man with a right sense of proportion think that difference of opinion concerning symbols should divide the hosts of God? Which is of greater consequence, uniformity in a ritual observance, or the practical interests of the kingdom?

Personally, I am a Baptist. I believe that our position with respect to baptism is both good scripture and good psychology. The scholarship of the world as a whole, it is our confident opinion, confirms our contention that the original baptism was immersion. I am aware that the higher critics are at work upon the literature of the New Testament. Auguste Sabatier writes in his epochal volume, Religions of Authority, "Was the institution of baptism the act of Jesus Himself? In the present condition of the text it is impossible to prove it." They tell us that the only passage in which Jesus commands baptism contains the trinitarian formula and, therefore, the earmark of the thinking of a later generation. But though the higher critics expunged from the New Testament every reference to baptism, which they cannot, I am a Baptist still. I am a Baptist, not because I am a legalist, and in bondage to the Jewish principle of conformity to outward commandments, but because I believe in the religion of the Spirit. I am a Baptist for the reasons which led to the institution of baptism in the first place, because it is inherently and spiritually helpful. Whatever the future holds in store, we have not outgrown the help-

fulness of ordinances. When the day comes that groom and bride can set up housekeeping more helpfully to themselves and to society without the preliminary sanctions of a wedding, when the day comes that the President of the United States can move into the White House more helpfully to himself and to the people, without an inaugural ceremony, on that day we will receive people into the church without form of any kind. If we may believe the psychologists of our time, it is most desirable to make the beginning of a course of moral action definite and emphatic. "We must take care to launch ourselves," says William James," with as strong and as decided an initiative as possible." It is impossible to affirm that any initiatory ceremony alone possesses pedagogic value. But if we employ any ordinance at all, what ordinance is more appropriate than the ordinance consecrated by the Master's example, by the usage of apostolic ages, and by its own profound expressiveness? The cardinal fact in the life of Jesus was death and resurrection; the cardinal fact in the life of the believer is death to the old self and resurrection to the new. When a man unites with the church he may well pledge himself to the supreme fact and to the supreme experience by the self-chosen and sacred ordinance of immersion. And I can never conceive of any correlation of Christian forces which can lead a true Baptist to surrender his personal convictions or to quench his testimony.

It is worth our inquiry, however, is immersion the fundamental ecclesiastical principle of the Baptists? The

authoritative exponents of our faith have never so affirmed. To quote one of them, President A. H. Strong of Rochester, "We stand above all things for a spiritual church." Historically, the initial Baptist protest was against infant baptism, because it tended to bring unspiritual persons into the church. It has come to pass, however, in the course of the years that other denominations stand with equal earnestness for the spirituality of the church, although they get at things in a different way. The Anabaptists were "again baptizers," not because they employed immersion, but because they believed baptism should be a personal expression of faith. Professor W. J. McGlothin of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary writes in a recent article concerning them, "Baptism was usually administered by affusion, though immersion was practiced also." Our British fathers occupied a similar position, as Rev. J. H. Shakespeare, secretary of the Baptist Union of England and Wales, has shown in a recent volume. To this day we refuse to be classified as mere contenders for the form of a form. "Our insistence," says President Strong, "upon the proper subject and the proper mode of baptism is not the essential, but only the incidental, of our belief." It is a well-known fact that many English Baptists do not insist upon immersion as an indispensable prerequisite to church membership. Alexander MacLaren, the foremost living Baptist preacher, F. B. Meyer, president of the Baptist Union of England and Wales, John Clifford, president of the World's Baptist Congress, these men, whom we are glad

and proud to claim as Baptists, are, or have been, pastors of churches, some of whose members have been immersed and some have not.

In our insistence upon believers' baptism we have been earnestly opposed to infant baptism, but we are not opposed to the public dedication of little children to God and his service. The powerful appeal which infant baptism has made to Christian hearts lies in its dedicatory aspects. There is something in parental hearts which demands that the church recognize the child as standing in some relation to the kingdom of God. It has been so since the days when Hannah came from the hill country of Ephraim to present her child, Samuel, at the tabernacle of God, and Mary of Galilee stood in the temple court with the child of promise in her arms. The child is a proper subject for Christian nurture and it is altogether fitting that the church should recognize the fact. And it is dedication only which infant baptism signifies to the members of evangelical churches. If we join with them in a dedicatory service for little children, possibly they will consent to stand with us upon our great historic principle of believers' baptism.

And if we should revert to the position of the fathers and accord personal freedom with respect to the rite of baptism, what would happen? Would immersion disappear? Then it is a burdensome legalism which can be sustained only by external authority and it deserves to pass away. But, if it is true, that there is in immersion a superior intrinsic helpfulness, then we may trust it to win against

all competitors. Suppose the whole question were lifted out of the realm of ecclesiastical controversy, would it not be in a fair way to be settled upon its merits? Truth has inner, assertive, conquering power and, if we are true to our testimony, we need not fear to trust it. In occupying such a position Baptists do not surrender their goal, they seek to attain it in a different way. They are confident that with a free field and no favors immersion, if it is intrinsically best, will ultimately prevail.

The vast practical interests of the evangelical churches demand a correlation of forces. And this is the white light of the judgment in which the Christian people of our time are called to stand,—have they sufficient statesmanship, courage, breadth of mind, and loyalty to providential guidance, to bring correlation to pass? Until the day when correlation becomes possible, if the day is not already here, let each man do his utmost to promote the interests of the church with which he is providentially identified. We shall do most for the common and the ultimate church by doing most for the denomination of which we are members. We await the guidance of the Spirit of Him who promised to be with us alway. While the pillar of cloud halts, we will halt. But when it lifts and swings forward, please God, we will follow.

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